

REMARKS

Claims 1-14, 16-26, and 28-31 are in this application and are presented for reconsideration. By this Amendment, Applicant(s) has added new claims 28-31 to address issues raised in the Office Action. The newly added claims 28 - 31 are based on the originally filed disclosure. Specifically, the claim 28 is based on page 7, last paragraph of the substitute specification and Figure 1. Claim 29 is clearly shown in Figure 3. Finally, claims 30 and 31 are disclosed on page 7, last paragraph of the substitute specification and also in Figure 1. The new claims do not add any new matter to the Application.

Applicant(s) thanks the Examiner for the telephone conference held on June 28, 2005 during which the Examiner pointed out that it is not clear that the “lug” is in contact with the sliding ring. The Examiner also stated that if the “lug” was in contact with the sliding ring, the present invention would overcome the prior art of record. Regarding the previously non-elected claims, the Examiner took the position that they will not be examined despite the amendment to the claims to remove the election requirement. Thus, Applicant(s) has withdrawn those claims from consideration.

By this Amendment, the Applicant(s) has added several new claims to particularly point out the combination of features which overcome the prior art references and respectfully makes assertions for overcoming the rejections of the outstanding Office Action dated June 28, 2005 in the following paragraphs.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 20 and 23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by the JP-2-199317 to Yao (the “Yao ‘317” reference, hereinafter).

The Yao ‘317 reference discloses a ball and socket joint with bellows. Figures 1-5 of the Yao ‘317 reference disclose elements around the ball and socket joint. It is the Office position that some of these elements shown in the figures anticipate the present invention.

It is Applicants’ position that claims 1, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 17, 20 and 23 are not anticipated by the Yao ‘317 reference. The present invention as claimed provides for a combination of features not taught nor suggested by the prior art of the Yao ‘317 reference. For instance, there are several differences for the present invention as claimed. Specifically, the Yao ‘317 reference fails to disclose that the parts 28 (equivalent to lugs according to the Office Action) are in direct contact with the L-ring A1 (assumed to be equivalent to sliding ring by the Office position). In contrast to the Figure 1 of the present invention, the “lugs” according to the Yao ‘317 reference are spaced away from the sliding ring A1. The present invention as claimed in claim 1 provides for the legs (including the lugs) which are in direct contact with the sliding ring 6. This is further clarified in the new claim 28 to explicitly state that the lugs themselves are in direct contact with the sliding ring.

Furthermore, the Yao ‘317 reference fails to disclose that the “lugs” have free ends (each), the free ends facing away from the ball pivot in the radial direction. In contrast to the Figure 1 of the present invention, the free ends of the “lugs” 28 according to the Yao ‘317 reference are facing the ball pivot. The present invention as claimed in claim 29 clarifies this

point by explicitly claiming that the lugs 5.2 have free ends (each) and the free ends face away from the ball pivot 3 in the radial direction.

Additionally, the present invention as claimed in claim 30 provides for the sliding ring which has an L-shaped cross section comprising an axial leg and a radial leg, where the radial leg is in sliding contact with the inner surface of the ball race 5. In contrast, the radial leg of the “sliding ring” A1 according to the Yao ‘317 reference is completely embedded in the sealing bellows 8 and is not able to contact the “ball race” 13.

Because of this feature difference, the radial leg 6.4 is arranged between (or separates) the sealing bellows 4 (or the pivot-side edge area 4.1 of the sealing bellows 4) and (or from) the lugs 5.2. Therefore, due to these differences, Applicant(s) finds that the Yao ‘317 reference does not anticipate the current invention and there is no suggestion or motivation to use the teachings of the references to provide the combination as claimed.

As the prior art fails to suggest the combination of features as claimed, Applicant(s) respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider the rejection in view of the new claims and in view of the discussion above. Applicant(s) respectfully solicits allowance of this application.

It is Applicants’ position that all claims are now allowable. Should the Examiner determine that issues remain that have not been resolved by this response, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants’ representative at the number listed below.

Favorable action is requested.



Respectfully submitted
for Applicant,

By:


D. W. Darren Kang
Registration No. 51,859
McGLEY AND TUTTLE, P.C.

JJM/DWK:
71084.15

DATED: September 28, 2005
BOX 9227 SCARBOROUGH STATION
SCARBOROUGH, NEW YORK 10510-9227
(914) 941-5600

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McGLEY AND TUTTLE, P.C.

BY: Tonithu Louie DATE: September 28, 2005